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ABSTRACT

Human resources, together with physical and financial resources, are the three most important means of success available to the manager of an organization. The human resource is the most crucial element for achieving productivity, but it is also the most difficult to manipulate. Alienation in the workplace is one cause of low productivity. Factors that can reduce alienation include smaller work sites, cafeteria benefits, provisions for employee selection of benefits, and career pathing. Within the field of human resource development are three activity areas: training, education, and development. Learning to improve performance on the present job (training) has an immediate and direct relationship to productivity. Learning to prepare for a future job (education) has an effect on future productivity. Training and education are effective if the human resource development personnel, management, workers, and union members are all involved. Learning that is not job related (development) has little or no direct effect on current or future productivity. Development can lessen some of the alienation by communicating the organization's concern for the employee and the quality of his/her work life. Development also keeps workers in a constant state of learning readiness. (YLB)

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Leonard Nadler

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The human resources, the people of an organization or a country, are probably the most essential of all the available resources and it is only in recent years that we have begun to focus adequate attention on them. Given the increased interest, an avalanche of experts and programs related to human resources has appeared. This has proven to be both a benefit and an obstacle.

It is a benefit since we now have much more data available to us to work with than ever before in history. An obstacle because the flood of people into the field has brought confusion and chaos. Through this paper, the reader will be able to identify the various activities in the field of human resources, with particular emphasis on Human Resource Development (HRD). First, however, let us look at resources in general.

Resources Available to Organizations

Every organization has a goal, a mission, or a purpose - or it ceases to exist. To achieve these ends, the organization is limited by the resources available to it, or by those it can obtain. There has never been an organization with unlimited resources, and probably never will be. Therefore, managers must identify how they can most effectively utilize the resources they have. There is no simple formula, and managers should not waste

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valuable time in seeking the lodestone that will produce the best organization. It is a constant process of searching and changing.

The task of the manager is compounded by the impact of factors outside the organization. These can be the community, the country, or perhaps, even an incident or action in another part of the world. The more a manager can learn about the various resources, and how to use them effectively, the more successful that manager will be.

Resources

The resources available to a manager can be grouped under three headings: physical, financial, and human.

The physical resources start with the natural resources within the purview of the organization. These can be the minerals, water, timber, etc. To utilize these, organizations build factories, warehouses, mills, and other edifices designed to make appropriate use of the natural resources.

The financial resource includes the cash, stocks, bonds, and other commercial paper that is part of organizational life. There is also the good will of the organization, frequently observed through the lines of credit available to it and similar financial resources.

The human resource includes essentially those people who are employed by the organization. It can also be extended to include the customers, the dealers, the community in which physical facilities are located - and even the public in general.

Of all the resources, the human is the most crucial to any discussion of productivity but it is also the most difficult to

work with. The inanimate physical and financial resources can be readily manipulated, as well they should be. The human resource resists manipulation, as it should. It is possible, however, to develop positive approaches to improving the utilization of human resources, without depriving the individual of humanity and dignity.

Human Resources and Productivity

One way to increase productivity in the work force is to find ways to make people work harder. This can be accomplished through coercion, threat of termination, or other negative approaches. Although these may work for a short period of time, in the long run increased productivity is best achieved through a positive approach. People will be more productive if they can be helped to work better, to see the benefits of their efforts, and to share in those benefits.

Alienation in the Workplace

The workplace should be seen by all as a place where production takes place, but also where people can experience personal satisfaction. These factors are not necessarily in conflict, as many studies have shown. To accomplish this match requires imagination and creativity on the part of the leaders of the organization, as well as the workforce as a whole.

If employees, at all levels, do not find the workplace satisfying, we can expect them to be alienated and therefore come to work under pressure. It may be the pressure of the legal structure of the country, or the pressure to earn enough to be able to support a family - or to meet the obligations of the

extended family. In any event, when an employee feels coerced - forced to work - it is no wonder that productivity lags.

It has been possible to identify several factors that can reduce the alienation. The following discussion does not include all of them, merely few, to indicate some of what is being done in various parts of the world - and can be done in Singapore.

Smaller Work Sites

As industrialization has spread, the tendency has been to think of bigger as being better. Many reasons have been given, and they seem valid. Experience has shown us, however, that downsizing into smaller work sites has many benefits. A major multi-national company, the Eaton Corporation, has been doing this, very successfully, for over ten years. (See CREATIVE WORKLIFE by Donald Scobel, Gulf Publishing Co., 1981.)

They found that a worksite of fewer than 150 employees functioned more productively than the large factories that had previously been the norm. It has not yet been possible to research the reasons for this, yet, but the end results were obvious.

Cafeteria Benefits

We frequently hear talk of providing for individual differences. Too little is done to make this a reality. If we wish individuals to exert their best efforts and be highly productive, it is important to enable those individuals to exercise some self expression.

In the U.S., one way this has been done is by providing an opportunity for individual employees to select from a broad spectrum of benefits. These have included: sick leave, health

benefits, dental benefits, personal leave, annual leave, flexi-time, etc. - the "cafeteria" from which choices can be made. Where this has been offered by an organization, the results have been a contributing factor to increased productivity.

It is recognized that cafeteria benefits may not be appropriate in some countries, or in some organizations. It is cited here only to indicate that a new approach (cafeteria, selection by the individual rather than the organization) to something that already exists (benefits) can be used effectively to reduce some of the alienation in the workplace and thereby increase productivity.

Career Pathing

In many traditional societies, the series of jobs that an individual will fill is preordained. There is little that any individual can do about that situation. There are some organizations, in various parts of the world that accept this philosophy without question.

By contrast, it has been found that by introducing elements of free choice it is possible to encourage people to work more productively. It is not suggested that tradition be pushed aside or ignored. Rather, that by introducing some elements of free choice it is possible to help individuals become more productive.

Career pathing suggests that if people are given some help in planning what they want to do in the organization, we will find untapped human resources - within the organization. When people do not feel trapped by tradition or by being ignored, they tend to react by accepting responsibility for improving their own

performance and finding those places in the organization where they can be used most effectively and productively.

Human Resource Development

The term "Human Resource Development" (HRD) is used to describe those activities designed to improve performance through learning.

There are many kinds of human resource activities, and when we use the designation of Human Resource Development we are describing those activities that utilize learning. By no means is it being suggested that this is the best way - it always depends on the situation, the problem, the employees, etc. The unique difference between HRD and the other human resource activities is that HRD is based on the utilization of learning.

We can define HRD very specifically as:

- Organized learning
- Within a specified period of time
- To bring about
 - . improved performance on the present or future job
 - . general growth of the individual and the organization.

Within the field of HRD are three activity areas that can be defined as follows:

Training - learning to improve performance on the present job

Education - learning to prepare an individual for a future job

Development - learning that is not job related, but for

general growth

The importance of the distinction among these three areas will be discussed in this paper as it is the basis for understanding how HRD relates to productivity.

Training

Training, as defined above, has a direct relationship to productivity - immediately. It is learning designed to improve performance on the job the employee currently holds. This raises the question, "Why should employees, on their current job, need training?"

Effect on Productivity

The first, and most obvious reason, is that a problem exists for which training could be the response. Not every productivity problem is amenable to a training response and other alternatives should certainly be explored. Too often, justified criticism has been levelled at HRD people for trying to solve all problems by training.

A perfect example can be found in the U.S. steel industry. Some of the steel mills are still using equipment that was installed over 60 years ago! Given that condition, there is little that training can do to increase productivity. Expenditures in training might produce some limited productivity increase, but much of that industry is near the borderline where additional training will not produce any sizable return on the expenditure. Rather, what is needed is a huge injection of capital investment. After that, training could be extremely useful to enable the companies to make maximum use of the new

equipment.

On a less dramatic note, training can contribute to increasing productivity if it is tied directly into management decisions. If management decides to purchase new equipment, the HRD part of the organization should be involved immediately. Too often, the HRD people do not know of the new equipment until after it arrives. Or, they find out about it when they are faced with an operational problem that could have been avoided by training employees to utilize the new equipment, before it was installed. If that is not done, management can anticipate losing productivity during the start up time. This can be avoided by involving the HRD people when the decision is being made, or immediately after it has been made.

The same can be said for new regulations, policies, rules, etc. These do not arrive in crates or boxes and therefore are not as easily discernible as a new piece of equipment. The HRD factors are the same. If the HRD people are involved as early as feasible, then it is possible to keep productivity high during the transition from the old policies or regulations to the new ones.

The essence of training is on the present job, right now, and that is where a manager wants to see productivity increase.

Working Together

It is not possible for the HRD people to solve productivity problems working in isolation. The problems are not those of the HRD people, they are the problems of the supervisor, the manager, the worker, or the union. Unless they all work

together, it is not possible for the HRD people to be helpful.

Supervisors, those concerned with getting out the daily work, must be in constant communication with their HRD people. As productivity problems arise, supervisors must be encouraged to seek the assistance of their HRD people without the implication that this signifies weakness or poor performance on their part. Executives and managers in organizations must establish the organizational norm: Seeking HRD help is a standard and acceptable procedure. Some of this they can communicate through their own behavior in relation to HRD.

Executives and managers should involve their HRD people in the decision making process. The more the HRD people know about what is being planned, particularly the changes related to production, the more possible it will be for them to do the front end work that is essential to any good training program. There are some "off-the-shelf" programs that are useful, but even when those are to be utilized, the HRD people will need sufficient lead time to appraise their relevance for the specific problem and the particular organization.

Where there are unions, they too should be involved. Good unions are interested in raising productivity. They object when the increase in productivity is achieved through a speed-up or any other device that forces the worker to work harder, rather than better. Obviously, unions are also concerned when increased productivity does not result in any benefits for their members. Unless there are political or other hidden motives, most unions are interested in HRD programs provided by employers that will improve performance and productivity. If the unions are not

involved in the process, it can be anticipated that they will be suspicious and resistant.

Education

Education, as previously defined, is concerned with providing learning experiences for individuals, for future jobs. As with training, it is job related, but it differs in that education is concerned with preparing the individual for a future and different job.

One distinction being made here is that the new/future job may be a promotion, or may just be different from what the individual is now doing. It could a machine operator moving to supervisor - or a supervisor being prepared to become a manager. It can also be a lateral transfer. As work changes, as people change, it may be highly desirable to educate an employee for a different, but parallel position in the organization.

Effect on Productivity

Education has no direct effect on current productivity! It is important to recognize this, or the focus of education will be lost. Education is for a future and different job within the organization. The payoff on education cannot be determined by the organization until the individual has moved to the new job. There will be an effect on productivity - but on future productivity.

This is one reason why it is important to distinguish between training and education. It does not diminish the importance of education. If the problem is current productivity, however, then education is not a satisfactory response.

Given those factors, why should organizations provide education? When used effectively, education can significantly reduce the time it takes for an individual to become productive - after being placed in the new job. Education is a management tool for preparing a work force for change, before the impact.

Working Together

As with training, education can be effective if the HRD people are involved in the organization's planning. The actual planning and staffing are different human resource functions, but this is one of the times when it is crucial that the various groups work together. Each has unique contributions to make to the situation.

Management must also be involved, at all levels. For example, education means taking a productive employee away from a supervisor for a specified time period. During that time, the supervisor loses the production of that employee. This can have a significant impact on the productivity of that unit, particularly if the selected employee is one of the better producers. Management must make allowances for that if they want supervisors to view education as a benefit to the organization rather than as a negative factor for themselves.

The same can apply to other levels of the organization. Managers will hesitate to send a supervisor for education unless there is some benefit or reward for themselves. Consider, "why should a manager be interested in losing the current input of the supervisor, while that supervisor off the job for education?" It also means that the manager may lose a good supervisor who will

then move to another part of the organization.

When using education for future productivity, it is necessary that the organization build in the rewards and the recognition that will encourage such behavior. When that is not done there is always the probability of increasing current productivity at the expense of future productivity.

Development

As defined earlier, development is learning that is not job related. Generally, it will have little or no direct effect on current productivity or on future productivity. Where then, does it fit into the productivity picture?

Concern for Individual

Earlier in this paper there was a discussion of alienation in the work place. It is possible that development, as defined here, can make a contribution to lessening some of the alienation. At present, we do not have the research or any evidence that allows us to make any categorical claims for development as one response to alienation. The experience in some countries such as Japan, however, does allow us to conjecture about this relationship.

When an organization provides development for employees it communicates concern for them, as individuals, and not merely as extensions of the machines with which they work. For supervisors, managers, and executives, it is a significant way for the organization to communicate that concern.

Some people contend that development is directly related to Quality of Work Life. That is, making development available

communicates concern and encourages employees to feel better about the work place and their organization. It removes them from just being on the payroll to being part of the organizational family. There are even those who say that development contributes to reduced turnover, better morale, improved job satisfaction, etc. It would be wonderful if some of this could be substantiated by research. At present, there seems to be some agreement that it does improve the self-image of the individual vis-a-vis the organization but hard research evidence is lacking.

Relation to Productivity

Whenever we talk of productivity, we must also talk of measurement. It is not possible to use the concept of productivity unless the output on the job can be measured. Since development is not job related, it cannot contribute directly to productivity.

Indirectly, it has some benefits, but they can only be identified and not measured. Learning that is not job related can still be helpful in creating a work force that is psychologically prepared to cope with change. Development can help the employees be more flexible and ready for change when it does occur.

It is possible to measure the results of development in terms of learning. It is not possible to measure it in terms of changes in performance, since that is not the objective. Therefore, reporting the results of development in terms of productivity is almost impossible. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why so little development is provided, as contrasted with training and education.

Learning Readiness

There is another aspect of development that has been ignored. We do have research that tells us that the more an individual learns, the more that individual is able to learn. Presumably then, in countries where learning is considered highly desirable, we can expect to see a good deal of development (non-job related learning) provided for all levels of the work force.

This is where we can point to Japan as an example. Japan has one of the highest literacy rates in the world. Traditionally, large Japanese companies provide development for all levels of their employees. Some smaller companies also try to do this, but it tends to be too expensive for the marginal company. Therefore, development tends to inure to the benefit of the larger companies.

As stated earlier, development does not contribute directly to productivity. The following hypothesis is made on the basis of my experience of working in Japan for four years (1959-1962) and some subsequent visits and work assignments. One reason for the high productivity in the Japanese work force was that development has kept them in a constant state of learning readiness. When training was required to adjust rapidly to some new technology, material, or process, the transition was quite easily made.

Therefore, development can contribute to increased productivity, but organizations should not provide development with that objective. If that is done, disappointment can result. Rather, organizations should be prepared to risk offering some develop-

ment, recognizing that there may be productivity benefits in the future.

HRD People

Throughout this paper reference has been made to HRD people. This is not the place to explore this in full, but it is necessary to make some comments related to this group.

In the past decade, HRD evolved very rapidly. It is not that it was not necessary previously, but rather that before 1970 too many organizations were not aware of the benefits of a soundly developed and implemented HRD program. The growth of HRD has brought a flood of new people into the field, many of them with little or no experience in HRD.

If HRD is to contribute to increasing productivity, it is essential that organizations be staffed with qualified and competent HRD people. This is not easy to do, for there are so many different viewpoints as to what constitutes HRD. It is incumbent on the leaders in organizations to search out those who can help them understand the vast potential of HRD, the various models, and particularly, how to apply the model to meet the needs of the organization and its work force.

Until the leadership devotes the time and energy required for this search, it is doubtful if HRD can achieve its potential contribution to productivity. The search for the proper HRD people, the model, and the mix, must start first within the organization. Then the leadership can reach out to identify the appropriate resources to meet their needs.

Conclusion

Human Resource Development can contribute to increasing productivity in an organization. It is essential that a distinction be made among training, education, and development. The HRD goals for the organization must be carefully specified. The process of using HRD must be one that involves all elements of the organization, the union (where there is one), and the community.

Through this mutual process, it is possible for HRD to be a valuable tool for helping organizations increase productivity.